EAST NEWS

Seven-Day Free Pediatric Surgical Camp Kicks Off in Karamoja

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Surgeons doing pediatric surgery at St. Kizito Hospital, Matany, Napak district on Monday. Credit by Delux Emmy Alomu

By Our Reporter

KARAMOJA

A dedicated team of healthcare professionals, including doctors, surgeons, and nurses, has launched a seven-day pediatric surgical camp aimed at providing free medical care for over 300 children under 18 in the Karamoja sub-region.

The people waiting for free treatment at Matany P.A.G Church on Monday. Credit by Delux Emmy Alomu

This first of its kind camp is organized by Amigos Internacionales in collaboration with healthcare workers from the Ministry of Health, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Doctors on Mission International, Bethany Kids, Mwagale Foundation, and South Baptist Missionaries. It will take place this week at St. Kizito Hospital Matany, Napak District.

The camp offers essential services for children aged 0-18, focusing on pediatric general surgery as well as ear, nose, and throat (ENT) cases, along with plastic surgery services.

Under pediatric general surgery, the team will address several critical issues, including hernias, undescended testis, Hirschsprung's disease, anorectal malformations, soft tissue masses, and hypospadias.

The pediatric ENT segment includes surgeries such as adenotonsillectomy, cleft palate and cleft lip repair, and excisions of various neck masses, helping children pass urine and stool effectively.

Additionally, the medical team will perform surgeries on children with closed alimentary canals (incomplete digestive systems), long bone issues, dental problems, and chronic wounds.

There will also be reconstructive surgery opportunities for those with burns and conditions needing plastic surgery, alongside pediatric orthopedic expertise for children born with mobility challenges.

According to officials from Amigos Internacionales, this camp is a continuation of last year's commitment to broaden the pediatric surgical outreach program beyond its usual areas of operation in southwestern Uganda and northern Uganda (Arua) to include underserved regions like Karamoja.

Dr. Paul Mulyamboga, the director of medical services at Amigos Internacionales and team leader for Doctors on Mission International,

stated that Karamoja was selected for their mission due to a significant lack of pediatric surgical services compared to other regions.

To ensure the success of the pediatric surgical camp, Dr. Mulyamboga mentioned that the team is also conducting a community medical outreach at the nearby Pentecostal Assemblies of God (P.A.G) church in Matany.

This outreach will encompass general medical care consultations, screenings for various diseases, surgical and pediatric consultations, as well as services for diabetes, hypertension, dental, and eye care.

Dr. Deusdedit Kateregga, the medical superintendent at St. Kizito Hospital Matany, highlighted the substantial unmet need for surgical interventions in the area, citing obstacles such as financial constraints, lack of expertise, and insufficient resources.

He explained that the hospital often struggles with complicated cases, especially among children, referring nearly 15 to 20 cases monthly due to the inability to conduct all necessary surgeries at their facility.
The medical superintendent expressed concerns about less frequent but serious surgeries, such as those needed for digestive issues and cleft lips, noting that they typically receive about two cases of each per quarter.

Patrick Kibwota, the country's operations director for Amigos Internacionales, emphasized that this effort is a pioneering initiative in Karamoja, with the hopes of making it a regular occurrence in the future.

Ambrose Besigye, the human resource manager and administrator for BethanyKids Uganda, explained that their international NGO aims to enhance access to pediatric care across Africa through a comprehensive approach that bolsters existing health facilities.

Dr. Denis Oluka, a general surgeon at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, noted that this mission will particularly benefit those unable to travel long distances for surgical care.

Fr. Manuel Inacio MCCJ of St. Kizito Catholic Parish-Matany expressed gratitude for the support being provided, believing that divine intervention has played a role in bringing these partners together to improve health in the community amid their ongoing prayers for better health services.

Madelena Losike, an elderly beneficiary, shared her relief at receiving free medical treatment for her body pain, admitting that she couldn't afford the care due to financial constraints.
Hellen Rose Alupo, a resident of Napepelu village in Napak, expressed her appreciation for the complimentary services she received for her eye and stomach issues.

She highlighted the value of the free spectacles she received, which would have cost her 250,000 shillings.

Alupo urged the partners to return and address more severe health issues, particularly chronic back problems in the region.

Amigos Internacionales is a dedicated humanitarian and development organization that has been serving communities since 1967. Originally launched as a mobile dental unit near the Mexico border, the organization has since evolved to focus on meeting human needs and spreading the message of Jesus to those in need.